

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

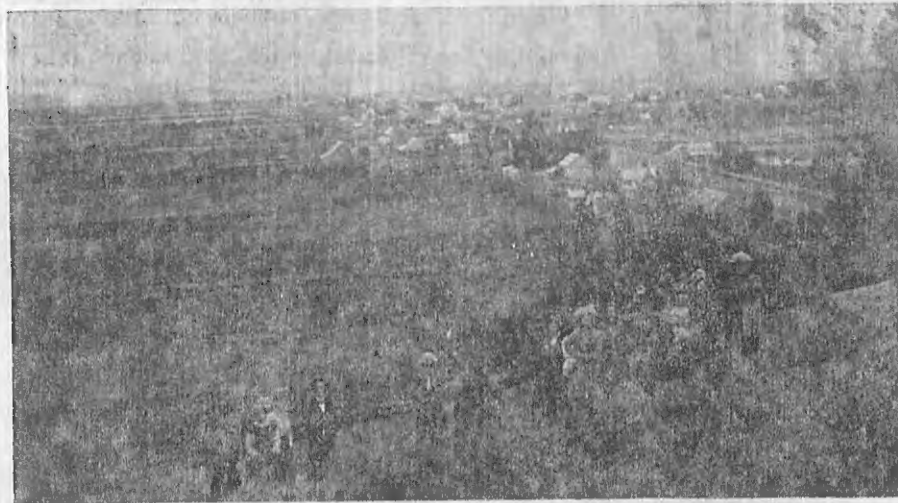
Progress Through Change

Few things are as consistent as change, and for Charleston, a Wasatch County farming community in the southwest part of Provo Valley, this has literally been true.

The story of Charleston's first hundred years has been one of an ever changing landscape.

Those who first settled along the Provo River in what was to become Charleston built a few mud dugouts and had courage enough to labor for their dreams. They were men and women who suffered the pains of pioneering, and who planted green fields where only weeds had grown. They built their farms into a thriving agricultural community and brought in industry to round-out their lives. Their community became known as the Hereford cattle center of Utah, and some of Wasatch County's most prosperous business firms were established in the area. Through careful husbandry of the soil, Charleston residents could boast some of the most lush meadows and best pasture lands in the west.

But Charleston residents were not destined to enjoy only the change from untilled soil to prosperity. The late 1930's brought changes that



A view of Charleston taken in 1903 from a hill south of town. Shown in the picture, left to right, are Lorena Brown, Emma Orgill, Hattie Hanks, Ervin Pack, Jennie Bagley, Violet and Lula Daybell, Myrtle Daybell, George W. Daybell, Mattie North, Allie Bagley, Phebe Daybell, Bette Webb and baby, Edith Bates and Belle Price.

forced many from their homes, put many hundreds of acres of choice lands under water and brought decline to the community.

For some years the industrial leaders of Utah and the nation had realized the value of a reservoir along Provo River. The growth of Utah's major industrial centers, including Salt Lake City and Provo, created a vast need for water storage and new hydro-electric projects.

Thus, in 1938 work began on a reservoir in the lower part of Wasatch County, known as the Deer Creek project. Three years were required to complete the dam, which held back the water that began to inundate Charleston.

Even though Charleston's landscape has changed considerably over the years, the people have not changed. As the waters began to rise behind the dam, many were forced to move their homes to other areas. However, those who remained have held fast to the fundamental virtues of courage and integrity that have played so great a part in shaping the lives of men.

As far as can be determined, the first two white men to camp in the area of Charleston were Charles Shelton and his brother-in-law, Alex Wilkins. They were surveyors from Provo, and came into the valley to lay out some of the property.

The first settlers to take up land claims in Charleston were George Noakes, William Manning and Mr. Manning's son, Freeman, who were all from Provo. They came in the spring of 1859 and put in a limited crop of grain, but lost the entire crop through frost. William Manning built a log house and corral on his land, which was Charleston's first permanent building. During the winter of 1859-60, Mr. Manning wintered some stock on his ranch.

Others were soon attracted to the Charleston area and began to take up land for homes and farms. Ephraim K. Hanks, an able assistant to President Brigham Young in the pioneer trek of 1847 brought his family to Charleston to settle. Mr. Hanks, noted as a scout and peace-maker among the Indians, was also instrumental in saving the Martin Handcart Company from starvation in the snows of Wyoming.

Early in 1860 John S. McAfee and his family arrived from Scotland and began settling some of the lands near Mr. Hanks. Others who claimed farm land in the Charleston area were John Ritchie, Nymphas C. Murdock, William Wright, Lewis Mecham, Enoch Richins, George W. Brown, John Brown and William Bagley.

The government opened up Charleston to homesteading in 1862 and the records show that John Eldrige was one of the first to receive homestead rights. He died before his homesteading time was completed, but his wife, Sina Eldrige completed the homestead. Others who took out homestead rights in Charleston included David Walker, George Noakes, George T. Giles, Joseph E. Taylor, Stanley Davis, Joseph Bagley, Finity Daybell, Emmanuel Richman, George Simmons, Esther Davies, Joseph Nelson, Isaac Brown, William Winterton, David Young, Eli

Gordon and John Winterton. Later, George T. Giles sold his homestead of 80 acres to Joseph Taylor for \$100, which doubled the size of the Taylor property.

By 1866, Indians had made life difficult in Provo Valley, and when the Black Hawk War broke out, settlers all over the valley banded together in Heber City for protection. Those in Charleston left their homes to seek the protection of a more populated area. Only the cattle were left behind, and many choice animals were shot or stolen by raiding Indian parties.

Late in 1867 the Indian difficulties subsided and some Charleston residents began moving back to claim their lands. Some new settlers also chose Charleston as their home, and by 1870 there were 15 families in the community.

Shortly after the city was resettled, steps were taken to secure a townsite on which a more compact community could be built. In 1873, twenty city blocks, each 26 rods square with four lots in a block were surveyed. The streets were surveyed to be six rods wide.

Indicative of the growth in Charleston is this newspaper report published in the Deseret News of May 2, 1873:

"Nymphas C. Murdock of Charleston, which is twenty-two miles from Provo and five miles from Heber City, called yesterday afternoon. He states that Charleston consists of about twenty-four families and that there is considerable farming land there still open to pre-emptors. A new brick meeting house is in the process of construction, and will shortly be completed. A small co-operative store is doing a good business, taking the produce of the people for goods and re-exchanging the produce again in other markets. Brother Murdock has charge of the store. There is no Post Office at Charleston yet, although it is on a direct mail route, but an application will soon be made by the people to the Department for that very essential convenience."

Charleston continued its civic growth as an unincorporated community for more than 20 years, and was ready for incorporation by December of 1899. The articles of incorporation were drawn up on December 30, 1899, with John M. Ritchie as president and William Daybell, G. W. Daybell, H. J. Wagstaff and George T. Baker as trustees. The first meeting of the board of the newly incorporated community was held January 10, 1900. Lucy A. Jacobs was named clerk with L. E. Barrows as town marshal.

During 1905 the community cooperated with Heber City and the county in building an electric power plant. A heavy debt was carried by the community for many years, but the plant became a successful venture and operated for several years. Joining again with the county in 1931 and 1932, Charleston officials bonded the community for \$100,000 and helped rebuild the power plant. The plant was able to compete with commercial power prices and still pay good dividends to supplement community funds. With funds from the power plant, all streets in the

town have been paved, money has been available for cemetery use and payments on the culinary water system have been made without additional tax levies. In addition, free electrical power has been supplied to various community and service groups.

One of the stalwart leaders in Charleston's civic growth has been



James Ritchie, president of the Charleston Town Board from 1909 to 1958.

James Ritchie, who became president of the town board on July 20, 1909, and has been serving continuously since that time. Many Charleston residents have served on the board with him. Present members include Dan Wright, Warren Farnsworth, Joseph Thacker and Duke Johnson.



The Charleston Town Board during the Wasatch County Centennial of 1959. Seated, left to right, Reed Edwards, H. Fred Price and L. Warren Farnsworth, president. Standing in the rear are Duke Johnson and Calvin Edwards.